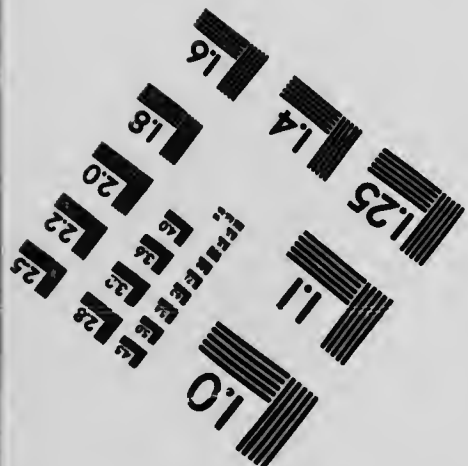
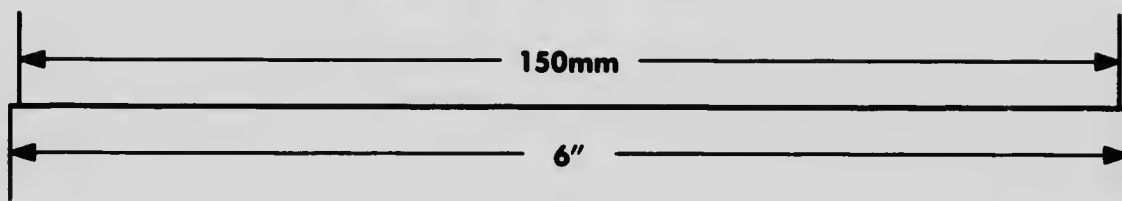
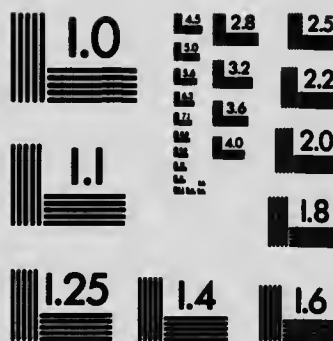
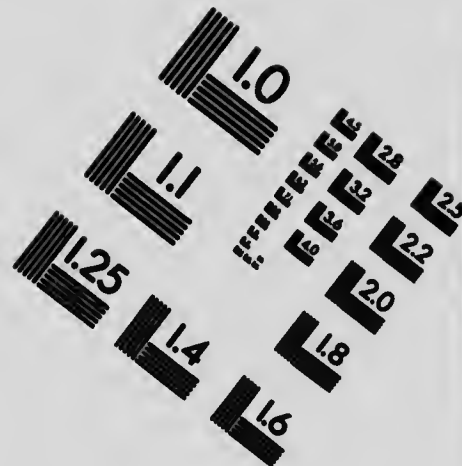
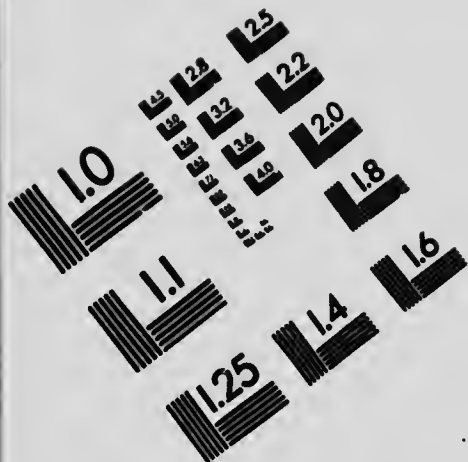


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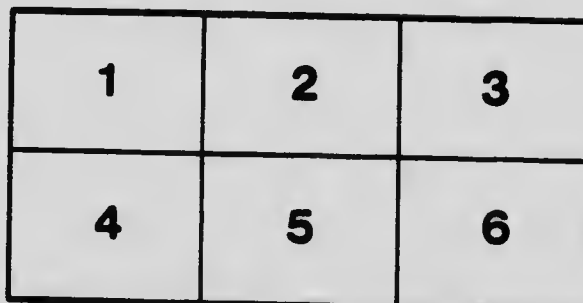
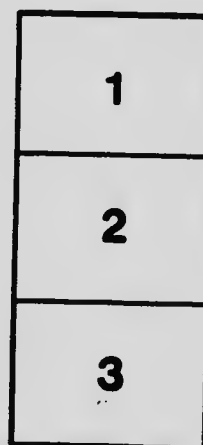
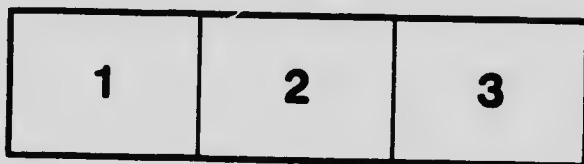
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Miscorablla

**SANT FRANCIS OF ASSISI  
XII SCENES FROM HIS LIFE AND  
LEGEND AFTER CIOTTO. WITH  
AN INTRODUCTION AND  
NOTES BY G. F. HILL**





**London, Philip Lee Warner, Pub-  
lisher to The Medici Society, Ld.**

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XII SCENES FROM HIS LIFE AND  
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AN INTRODUCTION & NOTES  
BY G. F. HILL. PUBLISHED AT  
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**The badge on the cover has been designed by  
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- three rings - used by the early Medici.**

## INTRODUCTION

**I**T is probable that, being asked to place Giotto in the history of art, most of us would describe him as the greatest of religious painters. But if by that we meant that his pictures were painted with the object of expressing some religious truth or belief other than the plain, straightforward story which they tell, we should be mistaking his significance. He was above all, as Ruskin long ago insisted, a man of practical common sense, with an unerring instinct for seizing the real, critical moment of a scene of action. Add to this faculty technical training, such as thousands of his contemporaries must have received under equally favourable conditions, and you have the basis of Giotto's mastery. That capacity for seizing the moment, for seeing the point, means artistic imagination. And without imagination it is impossible to have those qualities in the possession of which Michelangelo saw the superiority of Italian to Flemish painting - symmetry and proportion, intelligence in choice, and largeness of

## ST. FRANCIS

conception - in a word, style. Artistic imagination, on the other hand, must not be confused with that fantasy which seeks to make art the vehicle of ideas which it cannot bear. Symbolic pictures, such as Giovanni Bellini's Blood of the Redeemer, or Van Eyck's Adoration of the Lamb, not to mention the more mystical productions of the Netherlandish School, may be extraordinarily interesting to us, but they surely convey much less of the religious dogma or conception than could have been conveyed in words, and the interest we feel in them is for their accidental elements, and not for their central idea. The utmost that they can do is, possibly, to create an emotional condition favourable for the reception of religious influence of some kind. A bad artist could have told us as much about the central idea of the picture as the good one has told us; just as a hymn that is execrable doggerel may fulfil its object of expressing religious devotion much better than something with a claim to be called true poetry. Artistic imagination is, in the highest sense, good taste. To adapt a phrase of Joubert's, taste is the artistic conscience of the soul.

Now this highest faculty Giotto possessed pre-eminently; and in one sense it is a mere accident that it revealed itself in the painting of religious rather than secular narrative. His

## BY GIOTTO

genius would have triumphed equally had his subjects been always, instead of so infrequently, secular. When he has to deal with allegory, that pitfall for unwary painters, he does not stumble. Rumohr had criticized the childishness of the allegory of the ceiling-frescoes in the Lower Church at Assisi, and said that the friars and not Giotto must have been responsible for the conception. Crowe and Cavalcaselle, with an acuteness of perception not too frequent in their great work, remark: 'No doubt the allegory was not his, nor was it in his current of thought; but if the aim of an artist be to explain his meaning clearly there is no fault to be found with Giotto, whose thoughts are expressed with the same distinctness as if they had been conveyed in rhyme or prose.'

It is our misfortune that nothing of Giotto's is preserved that illustrates the history of his time, save the wreck of the frescoes in the Chapel of the Podestà at Florence. There, since the sacred place dictated a religious disguise, he was only able to allude to the truce of 1301 between the Florentine factions in a representation of Paradise, by introducing portraits of Charles of Valois, Dante, and other contemporaries among the blessed.

This mere allusion is all that we have of his in the way of illustration of contemporary history;

## ST. FRANCIS

and probably anything else of the kind that he painted took the form of portraiture - such as the fresco of Charles, Duke of Calabria, kneeling before the Virgin which he did in the Palace of the Signoria at Florence - rather than of narrative. We have to judge him, therefore, by his illustrations of the Bible narrative and of the Franciscan legend, and by a certain number of allegorical frescoes, of which the most remarkable are the wonderful series of Virtues and Vices in the Arena Chapel at Padua. Compare these last with the lovely allegories by Giovanni Bellini which once adorned a mirror-frame and are now in the Venice Academy, representing Prudence, the Barque of Fortune, the Sensual and the Virtuous Man, and the Epitome of the Virtues. Fascinated as we may be by the beauty of these Venetian panels, especially of the first two, there can be no doubt that, as giving direct expression to an idea, and leaving behind them an impression of their inner significance, rather than of their sensuous attraction or forcefulness of execution, they do not bear comparison with the frescoes at Padua. Whatever we may think of the desirability of such allegorical representations in art, the public has always desired them. The public usually demands something in the way of a story which is plain and clear, a portrait that it thinks is 'like,' or a land-

## BY GIOTTO

scape in which it can recognize the places. But, on the other hand, an allegory which represents a moral or intellectual conception by something frankly material also appeals to it; the less imagination it possesses the more is it attracted by a crude translation into material form of something which could be better expressed by words than in painting or plastic art. Giotto made the best of his opportunities; and these Virtues and Vices reveal the same clarity of conception and directness of vision as all the rest of his work.

The Franciscan legend, in the form in which it had already crystallized before Giotto's day, presents, owing to the character of the Saint, a sort of general resemblance to the Gospel narrative of the life of Christ. There is no cause to seek for other reasons for its popularity than the spiritual beauty of the central figure. That is a beauty which appeals not merely to the devout and simply pious; for even the most sophisticated and detached student of human nature or of the history of religion cannot be insensible to its spiritual value, although he may estimate at its proper worth the cloak of sentimentality which some modern writers have woven round the subject. To such sentimentality, as distinct from genuine feeling, Giotto's renderings of the legend are a salutary corrective.

## ST. FRANCIS. BY GIOTTO

Of the two great series of frescoes in the Lower Church of San Francesco at Assisi and in the Cappella Bardi in Santa Croce at Florence, the former was only in part executed by Giotto himself, and very various are the opinions of critics on the question of the attribution of the different scenes. The question is the more difficult to solve, because they have been considerably restored. The ordinary man will therefore be more sceptical than usual about the possibility of deciding which of these frescoes were painted by Giotto, and which by his assistants under his supervision. Generally speaking, there is improvement in the style as the story progresses; but several critics agree that the last four or five frescoes of the series, from the canonization onwards, and perhaps the first, are by a different hand. The date of Giotto's work here is not definitely fixed, but obviously the frescoes belong to an early stage in his career, probably before he went to Rome in 1298. The frescoes in the Bardi Chapel, on the other hand, belong to his maturity, being not earlier than 1317.

The text facing the plates is rendered - more or less freely - from the Italian version of St. Bonaventura's Life of St. Francis.

## PLATES

1. A Poor Man spreads his Mantle before St. Francis.
2. St. Francis renounces the World.
3. St. Francis supports the Church.
4. St. Francis receives the Confirmation of his Order.
5. He appears to the Brethren at Arles.
6. St. Francis before the Sultan.
7. The Death of the Knight of Celano.
8. He preaches to the Birds.
9. He receives the Blessed Stigmata.
10. The Death of St. Francis.
11. The Incredulity of Girolamo.
12. The Women mourning over St. Francis.

Of the above Numbers 1, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 12, are from the Upper Church of St. Francis, Assisi; 2, 4, 5, 6, 9, from the Bardi Chapel, Florence.

Nos. 9 and 10, pages 27 and 29, are after photographs by Alinari.



**I. A POOR MAN SPREADS HIS MANTLE  
BEFORE ST. FRANCIS.**

There was a man of Assisi who, being taught of God, when sometimes he met Francis going about the city, would put down his garments and sweep the road before him through the city, and would put them under his feet, saying that he was well worthy of such reverence, as being a man who should in a short time do great deeds, and therefore ought to be much honoured of all the faithful of Christ.

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## 2. ST. FRANCIS RENOUNCES THE WORLD.

The father of Francis according to the flesh (albeit he was the son of grace) was minded to take him before the Bishop of the city, to cause him to renounce into his hands the inheritance of his mother, and to render unto him all that he had. And Francis was glad and ready to do the will of his father. And incontinently they went before the Bishop, and there he, as one that was desirous of temporal poverty, humbly put off his garments and gave them back to his father, renouncing all temporal inheritance of father or mother. . . . The Bishop, seeing it, marvelled exceedingly at the great fervour of spirit that he saw in Francis, the servant of God, and with reverence arose and took him in his arms, covering him with his cloak that he wore.

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### 3. ST. FRANCIS SUPPORTS THE CHURCH.

Moreover the said Pope (Innocent III) saw another vision after this manner, that he saw the Church of St. John Lateran, which seemed to be falling, and a poor man, little and mean, set his back thereunder and held it up that it did not fall; wherefore the Pope said: 'Verily this is that man who by teaching of holy works and doctrine shall hold up the Church of God.'

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**4. ST. FRANCIS RECEIVES THE CONFIRMATION OF HIS ORDER.**

And when he had written the Rule . . . carried it to the Pope Honorius, and he confirmed it in the eighth year of his pontificate, and as the blessed Francis asked of him, so he obtained full.

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### 5. HE APPEARS TO THE BRETHREN AT ARLES.

At the provincial chapters, when the blessed Francis could not be present in the flesh by reason of some business, he was always present in spirit and in heart . . . and sometimes for marvel, by the grace of God, the blessed Francis appeared visibly to these chapters; as it happened that the brethren being in chapter at Arles, and brother Anthony, a noble preacher who is now called a most notable Confessor of Christ, preaching unto them of the inscription on the cross, to wit those words which say: Jesus of Nazareth, King of the Jews - one of the brethren, a man of proven virtue and worthy of belief, called Monaldo, saw by the grace of God visibly with his eyes the blessed Father Francis raised in the air with his arms stretched out, as though he had been on the cross, standing and blessing the brethren.

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6. **ST. FRANCIS BEFORE THE SULTAN.**

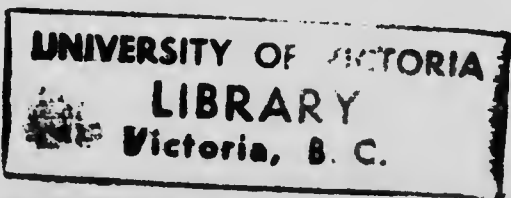
The blessed Francis said to the Sultan: 'If thou doubt to leave the faith of Mahomet for the faith of Christ, let there be made a great fire and make thy priests come and make me and them enter into the said fire, and whichever of us remains unhurt, in his faith believe.' And the Sultan answered: 'I do not believe that there be any of my priests who will defend our faith on such terms.' And this he said, for he saw one of his priests, an aged man of authority and proved in that faith, about to fly from before him. So the blessed Francis said: 'If thou and thy people will promise to be converted, if I escape from this fire, I am ready to enter into it; and if I burn, let it be imputed to my sins, and if I come out safe, know Christ for very God and Saviour of the world.' And the Sultan answered that he dared not take this trial for fear of the tumult of the people; nevertheless he bore very great love towards the blessed Francis, seeing him so constant in our faith.

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## 7. THE DEATH OF THE KNIGHT OF CELANO.

A certain knight, out of devoutness, prayed him very earnestly to dine with him, so that he and his companions accepted. And when they came, all the household made great cheer at the coming of their poor guests; and before they ate, the holy man, according to his wont, went to prayer, and afterwards, as God had shown him, he called the knight aside and said: 'Brother and my host, I foretell to thee that thou shalt not eat at this table, but elsewhere; therefore confess now all thy sins and omit none and repent truly, for to-day God shall reward thee in the other life for the good that thou hast done in receiving us and His other poor for the love of Him.' So the knight, believing the words of the blessed Francis, confessed to his companion all his sins, and prepared himself to receive death. Thereafter they went to table, and while he ate the knight passed suddenly from this life, according as the blessed Francis had foretold to him.



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### 8. HE PREACHES TO THE BIRDS.

Coming nigh to a castle called Bevagna he found gathered together in one place birds of many kinds, and coming among them he saluted them as though they had been persons, and the birds were still and began to hearken and turned towards him, and those which were on the bushes bent their heads and all listened as if they had had understanding. And the blessed Francis said to them: 'My brethren, praise God Who created you and clothed you with wings and feathers to fly and gave you the purity of the air and food that you may live.' And as he spake these words, the birds were wondrously attentive, stretching their necks and opening their wings and beaks towards him, as though they understood his words; and he with much fervour passed through the midst of them, and so near that he touched them with his cloak, and none moved, until the blessed Francis gave them his blessing and made over them the sign of the cross, saying to them: 'Depart'; and when they had leave, they departed all together.

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## 9. HE RECEIVES THE BLESSED STIGMATA.

One morning on the day of the feast of the Exaltation of the Cross, as the blessed Francis was praying, a Seraph descended from Heaven, having six wings shining with such splendour that he seemed to burn; and flying quickly he came over the face of the blessed Francis, who was looking up at the heavens. And between the wings of the said Seraph suddenly there appeared the similitude of a man crucified, with hands and feet stretched out in the manner of a cross, and marked with wounds like those of Our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . Seeing which the blessed Francis was all amazed, and his heart was filled with great joy and pain commingled. . . . And when the vision departed it left in him a marvellous glow of the love of Christ and on his body a marvellous impression of the marks of the wounds of Christ. . . . And it seemed as though his hands and feet were pierced with nails, the heads of the nails being in the palms of his hands and on his insteps, the heads being round and black, and the points right long and as it were riveted, which points passed through all his flesh. And moreover he had in his right side a wound all red, as though it had been made with a spear in that part where Christ received it; from the which wound often issued blood, as certain of the brethren saw, and his shirt and breeches were stained with it.

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## 10. THE DEATH OF ST. FRANCIS.

When the blessed Francis had ended this gentle exhortation, he asked that there should be read to him the Gospel of St. John, beginning 'Before the feast of the Passover'; and the blessed Francis began, as best he was able, the Psalm which says: 'I cried unto the Lord with my voice . . .' and ended it saying: 'the righteous shall compass me about, for Thou shalt deal bountifully with me.' Then this most holy spirit parted from the body and was received into the glory of eternal life. And in this manner the blessed father Francis fell asleep in Domino. And a brother, who was his disciple, saw his soul, bright as a shining star surrounded by an exceeding white cloud which bore it up into heaven to rest in Christ his spouse in eternal joy.

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## II. THE INCREDULITY OF GIROLAMO.

When the report was spread abroad of the blessed father Francis, how he was passed from this life, and when the miracle of the holy stigmata was known, there came to the house of the brethren many seculars and other religious to see and be assured of that which was a great marvel to them to believe. So it was not allowed to all men to see it commonly, but certain of the chief citizens of Assisi were chosen, to whom especially the brethren showed it. Among whom was a noble knight of great repute and very learned, and a devout man towards God; and was very loth to believe in this miracle of the stigmata of the blessed Francis, as was St. Thomas of Christ; wherefore he especially was there and saw and touched, that he might be well assured, and moved the nails with his hands in the presence of many seculars and religious, who were there, and the wound in the side likewise, so that he and all they who saw it were assured of that which they doubted.

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## 12. THE WOMEN MOURNING OVER ST. FRANCIS.

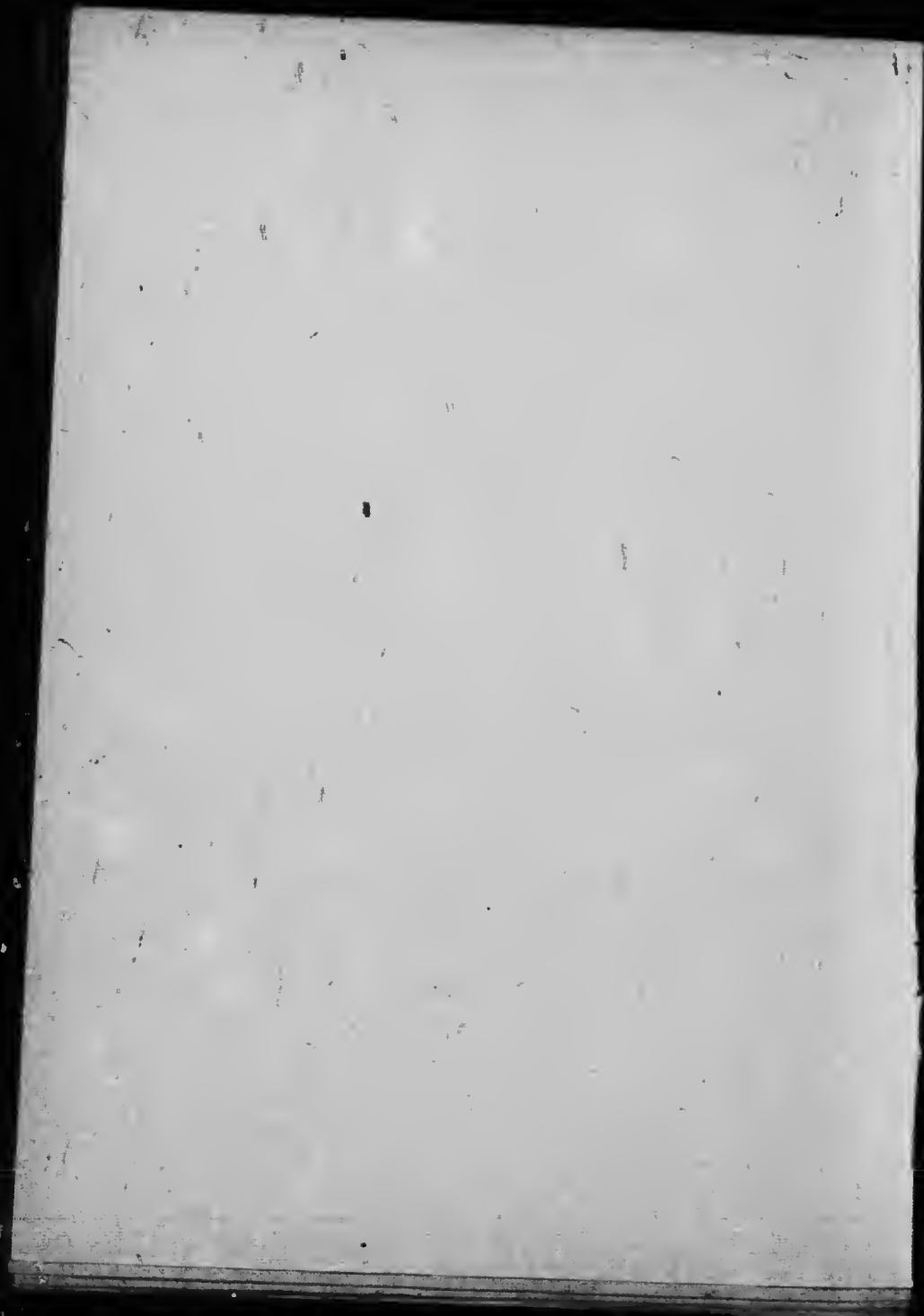
In the morning, when it was daylight, the companies and crowds of the city and of all the countryside gathered together, to bring this most holy body from that place to the city of Assisi; and moving with great solemnity of chants and hymns and the divine office and with a multitude of torches and lighted candles, with branches of trees in their hands, in this solemn wise they went towards the city of Assisi, passing by the church of St. Damian, where dwelt the noble virgin Clare, who is to-day a saint on earth and in heaven; and there they rested a little while. She with her holy virgin sisters were consoled to see and kiss that most holy body of their father the blessed Francis, adorned with those holy stigmata, and clear and bright, as hath been said.

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